

Dallas Erickson Testimony
House Bill 516
Senate Local Government Committee
March 14, 2011

Senate Local Govt. Comm.
Exhibit No. 7
Date 3-14-2011
Bill No. HB 516

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

This bill is not about "sexual orientation" or "gender identify". This bill is about having a statewide standard for categories in discrimination laws for the safety of families and the stability of businesses and churches and other organizations in Montana.

I mention the Missoula ordinance only to point out the extreme nature of the law which, among many other things, changes the standard of "gender" from what we are at birth to what we feel like or perceive ourselves to be at the moment. I have several emails from people in the Missoula and Ravalli County area saying that they either have stopped shopping in Missoula or if they do shop there they do not take their children shopping with them because of safety issues. The sad thing is that men have been seen in women's restrooms but there will be no reports or complaints because that is now legal and approved by the law and a complaint to anyone may be considered discrimination.

The interesting thing is that these men may very well be heterosexual men who use the law for their own sexual gratification. The point is, changing the definition of "gender" is extreme and there are other categories that local governments could put in their discrimination laws that would cause the same kind of confusion and safety issues.


Suppose that a city decided to be kind to the "poor" and put that category in discrimination laws. Think of the lawsuits filed by people who wanted to buy a house or a car and were turned down because they had no money. Adding the category of "homeless" to a local discrimination law could cause similar problems and concerns.

Certainly local control is important on many issues but the State retains control on many issues that allowing a local community to control would lead to confusion, safety issues and bad business relations. The categories in discrimination laws should be a state control issue for the same reasons.

I encourage you to read the Missoula ordinance for yourselves. Note the many areas that could cause confusion and concern and be the cause of litigation with no chance of an appeal process as is built into the state law.

You as a legislature should be setting a state wide standard and we ask you to pass this bill.

Thank you.


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